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ABSTRACT

State-sponsored preferential policies for ethnic minorities in the People's Republic of China are among the world's oldest and largest programs, encompassing approximately 110 million people and 55 different minority groups. This paper examines the minority policies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from 1949 to the present, from the perspective of modernization theory, the dominant discourse of economic development during the 1950s and 1960s. The paper gives particular attention to Chinese policies for minority education and a discussion of minority religious and language policies is undertaken to provide a broader context of the position of the government toward minorities. It examines the ways in which the CCP has implemented these policies in its efforts toward modernization. Contains a 26-item bibliography. (BT)

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China's Minorities and State Preferential Policies: Expanding Opportunities?

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Introduction

State-sponsored preferential policies for ethnic minorities in the People's Republic of China are among the world's oldest and largest programs, encompassing approximately 110 million people and 55 different minority groups. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has officially touted these policies since the early 1980s as part of China's drive toward modernization. This paper will examine the minority policies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from 1949 to the present, from the perspective of modernization theory. Particular attention will be given to Chinese policies for minority education, although a discussion of minority religious and language policies will also be undertaken in order to provide a broader context of the position of the government toward minorities as a whole. The ways in which the CCP has implemented these policies in its efforts toward the path of modernization will also be examined.

Approximately 9% of China's large population encompasses people of minority nationalities. According to even the lowest estimates, the size of the minority population in China is larger than the total population of many major European states, including Great Britain and France. These groups are concentrated throughout 2/3 of China's landmass, primarily in the border areas that the Chinese government considers vital to its national defense.

Although much of the territory which hosts minority populations is rich in natural resources, most minority areas are poor. Of 311 poor counties listed by the Chinese state council, 143 were in minority areas (Chapman et al., 2000). Additionally, more than 80 percent of Chinese people who suffer from lack of adequate food and clothing live in minority areas (Sautman, 1998).

China's official state policy emphasizes that the improvement of minority conditions is fundamental to the overall continued stability and improvement of economic conditions in the

entire nation (Postiglione, 1999), and since the 1980s preferential policies have been introduced in China as a means of closing the ethnic gaps in living standards and education. It is also hoped that these policies will reduce tensions between various minority groups and the majority Han Chinese. The intended results of the policies will be compared with the actual outcomes in the following sections.

Theoretical Framework

Modernization theory was the dominant discourse of economic development during the 1950s and 1960s. Early advocates of the theory such as economist W.W. Rostow placed nation-states onto a linear scale of progression depending upon their stage of development. Those at the advanced stages were associated with "advanced levels of technology, rational thought, western values and attitudes, and capitalist modes of production" (Ayres, 2000, p. 443). At the opposite end of the spectrum were the so-called underdeveloped Third World nations, where education systems were "charged with the task of helping to bring their ancient societies suddenly into the last third of the twentieth century" (Ayres, p. 445).

According to modernization theory, advanced societies become modern because individuals in those societies possess attitudes and characteristics that differ from those in traditional societies. For example, Rostow postulated that people in industrial nations have an achievement motivation; that is, they are driven by a desire to achieve, which thus pushes them to contribute to national development. People from traditional societies were believed to lack this quality.

Education became thought of as a vehicle for modern development because of an assumption that schooling would affect people's beliefs, abilities, and attitudes. According to

McGovern, modernization theorists expect schools to "prepare students with certain skills and values in order to shape workers who will be more productive and more adaptable to changes in industry and technology, thereby leading to economic growth for both nations and individuals" (1999: 8). The provision of mass education is therefore a prerequisite for "planned social change, modernization of the social structures, and a high level of sustained development and economic growth" (Morrow and Torres, 1995: 74). In other words, the thesis promotes the idea that the primary goal of modernization is the establishment of "modern" attitudes, and that as schooling changes these attitudes, modernization follows (Morrow and Torres). Hence, implicit in modernization theory is the idea that so-called traditional societies have cultural deficiencies that should be improved through education (Hansen, 1999).

Although modernization theory has been subject to criticism over the decades, international economic institutions such as the World Bank have continued to apply its basic tenets in structural-adjustment projects around the world. As the largest supplier of external finance to education, the World Bank maintains a global commitment to education as a source of human capital (Ayres: 445). Many of the policies recently implemented in China, the World Bank's largest borrower of investment financing since 1992, also reflect the tenets of modernization theory. The minority policies throughout modern Chinese history have always been implemented in the name of modernization, however, as this paper will discuss.

Since 1978 China has undertaken a series of economic reforms designed to improve a lagging socialist economy. Currently, China's economy is one of the world's fastest growing, with an annual average Gross Domestic Product of 9.8 in real terms between 1978 and 1994 (World Bank, 1996). This figure does not reflect the large regional disparities in the country, however. According to UNESCO estimates, the economic disparity in China between the

poorest and most prosperous regions is greater than that between the world's richest and poorest countries. As noted above, the majority of China's minority population lives in the poorer areas. The following sections will discuss the ways in which minority policies have been adopted in China to facilitate economic growth, development, and modernization.

Background: Identification and Description of Minorities

In the People's Republic of China, the term '*minorities*' refers to those people identified as minority nationalities (*shaoshu minzu*) by the Chinese government since 1979. The PRC government undertook identifying Chinese nationalities soon after it came to power, by sending investigation teams into regions heavily populated with minorities. Although 400 different groups initially identified themselves as minorities, the investigation teams determined that China had 56 nationalities, including the Han majority. Nationality refers to members of an ethnic group who have been historically a part of the Chinese nation. Chinese nationalities are defined and identified by a combination of shared history, language, economic life, common territory, and culture.

While most minorities use a language different from Mandarin Chinese, the native language of the Han majority, language is not crucial to a group's definition as a minority nationality. For example, because the Hui minority in China speaks Mandarin natively, it is their common practice of Islam that separates them from the Han. Since the end of the Qing dynasty in 1911 the Manchus also have used Mandarin as a mother tongue, yet they are still recognized as a minority nationality. There are also other groups who speak their own language but do not consider themselves as a nationality group separate from the Han. Cantonese speakers of southeast China are one such example.

Minority languages vary widely in both vocabulary and script. They are mutually unintelligible with each other and with Mandarin. Furthermore, several mutually unintelligible varieties of such languages as Chinese, Tibetan, and Yi are also recognized, but they are officially defined as dialects, not languages. Many of these do not have a written script. Regie Stites (1999) estimates that between 80 and 100 mother tongues are utilized in China, with 41 different writing systems. Only thirty-one of these were being used in China's education system as of 1989 (Stites, 1999). These languages can be divided into seven major language groups: Han, Sino-Tibetan and Sino-Thai, Tibeto-Burmese, Miao-Yao, Altaic, Korean, Austric, and Indo-European (Heberer, 1989).

In addition to language, religion is also often an important factor in identifying a minority nationality. The most widely represented religions among minorities are Islam and Buddhism. While in fact most major religions might be shared between the Han Chinese and various minority groups, those practicing Islam are identified solely as minorities. As noted above, the Hui minority, who are similar culturally and ethnically to the Han Chinese and who speak Mandarin natively, are categorized as a minority population specifically because they are Moslem. Islam is practiced by ten of the minority groups, including the Hui and the Uigurs. The total population regarded as Moslem is over 17,500,000 (Mackeras, 1998). More than half of these reside in Xinjiang province in northwest China. Buddhism is widely practiced mainly by the Tibetans and Mongolians, but Judaism, Christianity, and other religions are also prevalent among minorities. Minority religions are somewhat tolerated by the government, despite the officially declared atheism of the Chinese Communist Party. This will be discussed in detail in the section on Religion.

The size of the 55 officially recognized minority groups varies from the Zhuang, which is the most populous with 15.5 million people, to the Lhoba, which is the smallest, having only 2,212 people (Mackerras, 1994). In addition, there are also ethnic groups in China sharing a religion, history, and language that differ from the Han, but which the Chinese government considers 'too small' in population size to be recognized officially as a separate nationality. According to the 1990 census, there were 749,341 Chinese people belonging to 'not yet identified nationalities.' The distinction between the categories is significant. None of the minority policies apply to 'not yet identified minorities', although they may share similar characteristics and face similar setbacks.

Based on the diversity of the Chinese population, when it came to power in 1949 the Chinese Communist Party declared China as a multinational unitary state: one republic with numerous nationalities. This meant that minorities could enjoy a degree of autonomy, but they were forbidden to secede from China. This policy was mainly implemented as a result of China's desire to resist Japanese aggression in the Mongolian areas of China. The parameters of autonomy gave minorities the right to some political control over their own areas, with members of the relevant minority holding positions of political power. Minorities also had the right to use their own languages and to preserve their traditional literatures and the arts. Furthermore, because of the great diversity of customs among minority groups, minorities were allowed some flexibility to apply policies as appropriate. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) this stance of tolerance was reversed, as the next section will discuss.

Cultural Revolution 1966-1976

The Cultural Revolution in China was a period of major turmoil throughout the nation, during which time individuals perceived as intellectuals, as wealthy, or as sympathetic to the west were persecuted in the name of building a 'modern' Marxist society based on 'equality'. Throughout China religions, traditional literatures, theater, and other arts were suppressed in favor of models that were accepted as revolutionary. It is therefore no wonder that the minorities, with their many different customs and beliefs, were also among the many targets of persecution.

During the Cultural Revolution it was officially denied that China was a multinational country. The minority issue was declared settled, and thus nationality policies were no longer needed. Massive pressure to assimilate minorities was undertaken through pronouncements such as "they should live in houses instead of tents..." and they should "...wear normal clothes instead of costumes" (Heberer, 1989: 26).

What were known as the "four old things" (*si jiu*: old thinking, old culture, old morality, and old customs) were being suppressed throughout China during this period. Similar to the philosophy of modernization theory, the *si jiu* were considered backwards attitudes that would hinder development. Minority languages, scripts, customs and manners were also condemned as 'backward'. Presses that printed nationality languages were thus shut down, and newspapers and radio broadcasts in minority languages were discontinued. Almost all schools for minorities were closed, and those that continued provided instruction only in Mandarin.

Religious persecution was also widespread. For example, stories of Moslems being cooped up in pigpens, and of being forced to eat pork, are fairly common from that time period. In some cases religious leaders were executed. In many minority areas, places of worship were also destroyed. For example, of 6,259 monasteries and nunneries in existence in Tibet prior to

1950, only 13 survived the destruction of the Cultural Revolution (Postiglione, 2000). Even traditional holidays of minorities were forbidden, and those who celebrated them were labeled as "counterrevolutionary."

Expressions of minority culture, including songs, dance, films, folk songs, and operas, were called "feudal, capitalist, revisionist, poisonous weeds" (Heberer, 1989: 27), and were therefore prohibited or subject to revision in order to meet revolutionary standards. The traditional medicine health care that certain minorities practiced was also regarded as superstitious and backwards, and was forbidden. Because of the lack of traditional physicians and medics in minority areas, in many cases traditional medicine practices had been the only available health care in these regions.

Finally, the policy of regional autonomy for minorities, described as "emphasizing nationalism to the exclusion of patriotism," was condemned as creating a national schism Mackeras, 1995: 152). The Chinese Constitution of 1975 eliminated the right of minorities to regional autonomy, prohibition from discrimination against ethnic minorities, and the freedom to preserve languages and customs.

After Mao Zedong's death in 1976, many of the negative policies implemented throughout China during the Cultural Revolution began to be reversed, and China's new policy striving toward 'the Four Modernizations' (in agriculture, industry, defense, and science and technology) was introduced. While the minority policies implemented during the Cultural Revolution were in fact officially proclaimed as eliminating backwards superstitions and attitudes, and hence promoting modernization, the persecution they allowed is today condemned by the Chinese Communist Party as "feudal, fascist, [and] reactionary" (Heberer, 1989: 28).

Since 1977 the Four Modernizations policy has influenced the development of education in China. State-sponsored education has been promoted in all regions as a crucial means by which to achieve technical and economic development, and to ensure state loyalty (Hansen, 1999). Minority education is of particularly high priority. In 1980, the Ministry of Education and Commission on Nationalities Affairs evaluated education in minority areas and concluded that most minorities were "extremely backward" as to the level of education (Hansen, 1999). New policies to promote the 'modernization' of minorities since the early 1980s are described in more detail in the following sections.

Minority Policies: 1980 to the Present

Religion

Despite the explicit atheism of the Chinese Communist Party and the periods of strong religious persecution in China, religion still retains importance among certain minority groups. Islam, Tibetan Buddhism, and Mahayana Buddhism all have clergies that exert powerful influences over their own nationalities, and play a role in the preservation of ethnic identities. It is clear from China's stated policies toward religion, however, that religious beliefs are still considered to be among the attitudes hindering economic development.

Heberer summarizes the official Chinese position toward religion as being:

> "...a historical product that can only be abolished under certain socio-economic and other conditions such as spreading scientific and cultural knowledge. Religion has to do with a believer's attitude toward life and is hence an ideological problem. Ideological questions can only be resolved by democratic methods, education, and correct upbringing... Experience shows that the influence of religion declines as material conditions become better, political participation increases, and the level of education rises" (1989: 112).

So while certain religious practices are in fact allowed, as will be discussed, the focus is on providing alternative education to eliminate the "ideological problem" of religion.

For all periods except the Cultural Revolution, the policy toward religion among minorities has been one of relative tolerance, but only within several clearly defined parameters. For example, although all four constitutions (1954, 1975, 1978, 1982) of the People's Republic of China state: "citizens enjoy freedom to believe in religion and freedom not to believe in religion and propagate atheism" (Mackerras, 1994: 156), only state-sponsored religious organizations are actually allowed. Hence, members of those religions that have not been officially sanctioned (such as *Falun Gong)* are subject to arrest and persecution. A distinction is also made between religious activities that are acceptable, and feudal superstitions, which are banned. Religious activities include chanting scriptures, burning incense, and attending mass. Feudal superstitions include beliefs in the power of witch doctors and *feng shui* (geomancy).

Furthermore, even those religions that are accepted are not to interfere with politics or the legal system, and are not to be used to split the country. "Splitting the country" is applied to any faith where the religious leader is perceived as promoting an authority outside the realm of the state. Chinese Catholics, for example, cannot recognize the authority of the pope, nor is the Dalai Lama officially accepted as a Buddhist religious leader. This policy has been frequently pointed to, particularly in Tibet, as justification for imprisonment of Buddhist nuns and monks without trial. Although human rights activists frequently discuss religious persecution in Tibet, the Chinese government calls such occurrences the "suppression of secessionist activities." Religious customs are also only permitted if they are not perceived as interfering with socialism. For example, Moslems may abstain from eating pork, but they cannot have more than one wife.

Heberer states, "[t]he Communist party sees itself as the enlightened element, and sees its mission as raising up the common people" (1989: 11). Members of the Chinese Communist Party must thus exemplify the Marxist philosophy, and hence promote atheism. Because religion is such a prominent cultural factor among many minorities, however, some minority CCP members are partially exempt from this rule. Communist Party members in Xinjiang, for example, may be Moslem and attend certain religious ceremonies such as funerals, but they may not pray at the mosque five times a day. These policies clearly reflect that while the government is officially willing to make some compromises, certain practices, beliefs and attitudes are nonetheless deemed unacceptable.

Propagating even officially acceptable religious beliefs is also not allowed. While some religious groups may run designated schools that aim to teach aspiring clergy Arabic, the Koran, and Islamic doctrine, practices, and history, they absolutely may not interfere in public school education. Education is solely the realm of the state, and all education in China is nationalized. In China the government, educators, researchers, and many intellectuals praise education as a means of "improving backwards habits, or civilizing the backward" (Hansen, 1999: 4). Permitting religious values that are perceived as "backward" to permeate an education system that is intended to civilize and modernize would therefore not be suitable.

Thomas Heberer makes the urgency with which this civilization project is to be undertaken clear in his paraphrasing of the Chinese government's attitude toward religions, as described in China's Research on World Religions (*Shijie Zongjiao Yanjiu*):

> "Although the doctrines and the rights of religion present the objective world in a distorted form and are contrary to Marxism, and although religion has a narcotic effect, the practice of religion must be permitted in a socialist society. Atheistic education, must, of course, be reinforced to eliminate the influence of religion as rapidly as possible." (1989: 114)

The next section will discuss China's national education system in more detail.

Education

Educating 1.2 billion people would present a challenge for any nation, but the needs of one as diverse and rapidly changing as China's are formidable. Giving consideration to the variety of minority nationalities in China presents particular challenges. Although there are variations in education levels among minority groups in China, minority children still tend to have higher dropout rates from school than do Han children, and their illiteracy rates are also generally higher (Kwong and Xiao, 1989; Mackerras, 1995). The education gap is particularly apparent at the tertiary level. On the whole, the proportion of minority higher education students has been below the proportion of minorities in the general population (Sautman, 1999).

Language Barriers

Scholars such as Jing Lin (1997) and Regie Stites (1999) have identified language barriers as being fundamental to the problem of educating minorities. Prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, only 11 of the minorities had their own written language (Kwong and Xiao, 1989). Communist government initiatives since then have helped develop a written script for 32 minority nationalities formerly without one (Lin, 1997). Such diversity of languages is a barrier to the nationalized curriculum, particularly in China's rural areas where many of the nationalities reside. By law minority languages are granted equal status with Mandarin; however, standard Chinese is the official language of government agencies, the media, and most educational institutions. Most employers, even in minority regions, also require

fluency in Mandarin Chinese. Minorities who do not speak Mandarin fluently therefore have fewer job possibilities.

As noted, modernization theorists expect schooling to provide students with the skills necessary to be productive workers in society, thereby leading to economic growth. From this perspective, Mandarin must be taught in school, because Mandarin speaking skills are necessary for employment in Chinese society. In the People's Republic of China, bilingual education is utilized as a tool in minority areas to teach Mandarin to non-native speakers. Bilik states "the Han language is seen as a force for modernizing" (1998: 48). Bilingual education is hence not an end in itself, but is regarded as a transitional measure to teach the dominant language, which is considered both more useful, and more advanced (Bilik, 1998).

Typically bilingual schools, located primarily in the minority autonomous regions in the west, use the mother tongue as the main language of instruction until the minority students' third year, when standard Chinese is introduced. By middle school, however, Mandarin is the sole medium of instruction in most schools. Bilingual education at the elementary level is available only in those languages with a written script.

While bilingual education policies may seem like a logical approach to modernization from the perspective of the theory's advocates, such policies are in fact not at all simple to implement in China. Lin, for example, points to the logistics of translating standardized textbooks and other scholarly materials into minority nationality languages as a factor diminishing the ability of bilingual systems to succeed. Translators are often poorly trained and insufficient. Furthermore, texts often become 50% longer after translation, thus increasing the cost of printing. Nevertheless, in accordance with government regulations, the sale price of textbooks cannot exceed that set for the national curriculum. Printing houses therefore may run

at a deficit and become unable to operate normally. Because of these complications, the volume of printing of translated texts is very small, sometimes numbering only a dozen copies (Lin, 1997).

National Curriculum

Even without the difficulties of implementing bilingual education, other challenges exist. In spite of modifications made in individual schools to accommodate minority languages, most schools in minority areas do not deviate from the unified national curriculum in philosophy, methods, or content. Hansen (1999) and Bass (1998) identify this as a barrier to the education of minorities, as students may not identify with the curriculum content if it is not relevant to their cultural experience. Throughout China textbooks are referred to as *tongbian jiaocai* (uniformly written teaching materials), and are written and printed centrally. This means that the same version of eighth grade mathematics, history, or science is offered at any school in China, regardless of the wide variation in geography, agriculture, climate, language and local customs throughout the country. *Tongbian jiaocai* have a very nationalistic content, which emphasizes the unity of China's people and the bright future of the country (Hansen, 1999; Harrell and Ma, 1999). Individual minority histories, literature or other cultural materials are not likely to be a part of the curriculum in any minority area.

This homogenizing strategy is also evident in the special primary and secondary boarding schools that were created throughout minority regions in order to enroll students from remote locations who could not otherwise attend. Minority boarding schools are located in county or prefecture capitals, and enroll students from a variety of minority groups. Students are subsidized for food, clothing, lodging, tuition, and study materials. Because the students cannot

easily leave, the boarding schools have more control over their lives than do regular day schools. Students have less interaction with their parents, who therefore have little influence over their spare time. Additionally, because of the language differences among the student body, they use Chinese more than they would if they were living only among speakers of their native language. Boarding school students also cannot participate in religious activities (Hansen, 1999). Thus, minority customs are discouraged.

Barry Sautman quotes a Han Chinese specialist of minority affairs as saying "the Han nationality has always kept a higher level of development, so many of the ethnic minorities have learned a lot from the Han nationalities' mode of production and way of life" (Sautman, 1998: 88). The standardized Chinese curriculum serves as a vehicle for instilling attitudes and beliefs about the desirable Han Chinese way of life, while at the same time trying to eliminate those minority values perceived as not conducive to development. In fact, boarding school pupils' scores on standardized examinations tend to be higher than those of minority students in regular schools (Hansen, 1999). This serves to reinforce the belief that discouraging certain minority practices in favor of 'Han' values will facilitate a more educated populace. As Hansen states, "institutionalized education is emphasized as crucial for achieving a technically and economically developed nation" (Hansen, 1999:18).

Nevertheless, by the tertiary education level the gap in enrollments between minority students and the Han Chinese is substantial. Statistics suggest that one reason may be that passing the standardized college entrance exam in Chinese is a prohibitive undertaking for non-native Chinese speakers. In 1977, the same year that China reinstated the national college entrance exam, the number of minorities enrolled in colleges dropped to 4.2% of the total college student population. This was only two years after minority enrollments had reached their highest

level since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, 6.5% of the student population. In recent years the minority enrollments have also fallen, from a high of 7% in 1991 to 5.7% in 1995 (Sautman, 1999: 180). This is well below the total Chinese minority population.

Higher Education

Admission Incentives

China envisions its universities as centers for training the highly specialized personnel needed in the new economy, and for keeping abreast of technological developments (Min, 1997). Destroyed by the Cultural Revolution, reforms of China's higher education system were prioritized in the late 1970s as part of China's efforts to modernize. Increasing minority enrollments in higher education is viewed as a necessary means by which to facilitate economic development in minority areas. Therefore, the government has implemented preferential university admission policies through a variety of means. These policies are primarily aimed at training minority personnel for professional work in minority regions, a goal that is considered integral to China's national unity and development.

One measure to increase skilled labor in the minority areas was through the establishment of thirteen national minority universities. The purpose of these institutions, which are specifically dedicated to the education of minority students, is to train high-level Communist cadres to work in the minority areas. Most of these institutions are located in minority regions. Although the nationally administered college entrance exam (*gao kao*) is typically held in Chinese, minority students seeking admission to one of the minority institutes may take the exam in their native language (*min kao min).* This policy is grounded on the assumption that non-native Chinese-speaking minority students are at a disadvantage when taking the *gao kao*. Thus,

allowing them to take the exam in their native language is intended to provide a means by which to attain higher exam scores, and hence more opportunities to enter college. Applicants to minority region comprehensive universities and polytechnic institutes may also take the exam in the native language. Many such students also take certain college courses in their region's main minority language, but *min kao min* students may also take courses solely in Mandarin if they choose. Some minority institutes also have their own entrance exams; these are also administered in the local language. Additionally, students may take a B text entrance exam, which, although offered in Mandarin, is easier than the standard national entrance exam (Sautman, 1999).

In addition to the variety of test-taking measures in place, there are also other policies that aim to make minority students' scores more competitive. These include granting minority students a number of additional 'bonus points' (*jia fen*) on their entrance exam scores. Bonus points vary in range from 5 to 100, out of a possible 630-640 needed to gain admission (Kormondy, 1995; Sautman, 1999). The number of points added depends upon myriad circumstances. For example, non-native Mandarin speakers opting to take the entrance examination in their mother tongue will receive fewer additional bonus points than those who elect to test in Mandarin. The number of additional points for minorities also varies according to which region the student is from, and according to major. There are areas where more bonus points are granted for students majoring in the natural sciences—which are considered more difficult than the liberal arts. The minimum score needed for admission also varies between universities, with more prestigious universities requiring higher scores.

Some universities also offer special remedial courses for minority groups, including Chinese language classes to prepare pupils for coursework with the mainstream of students after

several years. Whether or not these courses are offered is based on individual university's policies, not on individual students' Chinese language ability. All students at the Central Minority Institute in Beijing, for example, are required to take two years of Chinese tutorial classes before beginning their regular coursework, regardless of their Chinese language ability. In contrast, China's most prestigious institute of higher education, Beijing University, does not offer any Chinese tutorials. All entering students at Beijing University must pass the *gao kao* in Mandarin, and non-native Chinese speakers are expected to keep apace with their Han Chinese classmates if enrolled there.

Minority enrollments in higher education steadily increased between 1978 and 1992 (Sautman, 1999), which might indicate that the variety of preferential policies in place were successful at attracting minorities to higher levels of education. Since 1992, however, minority enrollments have again shown a decline. This trend may suggest that the policies implemented to attract minorities to higher education and facilitate economic development are in fact being impeded by China's recent rapid economic growth. The adoption of market economy mechanisms in the higher education system in fact create new challenges for educating China's minorities, as the next section will discuss.

Higher Education Reforms

Prior to 1980, institutions were almost totally supported by state appropriation. Students were not required to pay tuition costs, and they were supported with meal stipends and free housing. After graduation students were allocated a position by the government. The central government controlled the education budget, channeling funds through the Ministry of Finance to the ministries and local governments. Unspent funds were later returned to the central government.

Since 1980, however, central and local control of income and expenditures has been demarcated, and the local government is now given significant autonomy in the management of resources, including being made to bear partial responsibility for expenditures of education. With the reduction of income from the central government, universities have been forced to find alternative means of producing income.

Self-supporting students were first introduced at some universities as a means of diversifying funding in 1985. Since 1997 all higher education institutes have charged fees. The government set a standard tuition rate of 1000-1800 yuan (approximately $150) per year in 1993, but institutions are given the authority to adjust fees according to the market (Cheng, 1998). Tuition fees are calculated based on what students can afford, in comparison with the prospective returns of graduates. Therefore, universities in prosperous areas charge higher fees than those in less developed areas, and higher fees are also charged to students in popular fields with higher rates of return (such as business).

Tuition at the Central Nationalities Institute in Beijing during the 1996-1997 academic year ranged between 1,000 to 1,400 yuan for all majors except ethnic languages and literatures, linguistics, and anthropology, which were exempt of tuition costs. Even with an 80 yuan stipend per month provided to the students, minority officials felt these costs were too high for minority students to afford (Sautman, 1999). Nevertheless, tuition fees were increased by 20% nationwide in the academic year beginning in 2000 (*People's Daily*, 2000).

Students majoring in fields with shortages, such as teacher training, or agriculture and forestry, are not charged tuition (*China Education Daily*, 2000). Ethnic minorities are also often not required to pay tuition, providing they agree to study the field that the government allocates for them. Such fields have shortages of students because the economic return for post-graduation

employment is very low. Therefore, while minorities might benefit from the opportunity to a free education in teacher training, they cannot study a potentially more lucrative field such as business, unless they can pay the tuition themselves.

To offset the potential disparities that charging tuition creates, the Chinese government introduced a scholarship policy in 1983 based on three criteria. In addition to the tuition scholarship awarded to students specializing in fields urgently required by the state but providing low private return, there is also one type of scholarship given for academic excellence. However, a survey conducted by Zhang Minxuan in 1993 showed that none of the top scholarship award recipients were from peasant families (Zhang, 1994). This may be due to the gap in educational quality between rural and urban schools. Having lower levels of economic development than other parts of China, rural regions have fewer resources to invest in education. Thus, many of the rural schools suffer from inadequate educational facilities and shortages of quality teachers (Bass, 1998). Because only a small percentage of China's minorities reside in urban settings, it is probable that few recipients of academic scholarships are minority students.

Another type of scholarship is directly aimed at minority students, however. It is provided to students who will relocate after graduation to remote areas with harsher living conditions. Minority autonomous regions are included in this category, and this policy aims to encourage those minorities who attend college in urban areas to return to their home regions after graduating. As new opportunities emerge in the new economy, however, college graduates have become inclined to seek employment in the more prosperous urban areas (Postiglione, 1999). Minorities on these scholarships who choose not to return to their home regions after graduation must pay a fine to the government. In many cases the students who do return are unable to find adequate employment, because of the poorly developed economy in minority regions. Therefore,

while the scholarship system does provide potential educational opportunities, it may not be achieving the desired results.

Furthermore, the need of universities to generate other sources of revenue in addition to tuition may also impact minority education in other ways. Currently the largest sources of alternative funding are commercial or industrial activities operated by the institution. University income is also generated through research, development and consultancy (Cheng, 1998). Because the success of such enterprises is dependent upon the institution's location, those institutes located in rural minority autonomous regions are at a particular disadvantage economically. To offset this imbalance, the Chinese Central Government recently allocated 610 million yuan to support the development of higher education in western China, where most of the minority autonomous regions are. The fund is to be used to improve the teaching and working conditions of the higher education institutions in the area (*People's Daily*, 2000). While this investment presents some hope for the improvement of universities in minority areas, graduates of these institutes may still be faced with minimal job opportunities. Higher education may create a more highly skilled work force, but if there are no jobs available these skills will not contribute to economic development.

Finally, although the higher education policies described above may expand minority opportunities in higher education, it is evident that these opportunities still have limits. As discussed, students may take the college entrance exam in their native language only if they intend to enroll in a minority institution or other university in a minority area. However, the majority of China's prestigious key universities are located in the Han coastal areas, not in the minority regions (Sautman, 1999). Mandarin proficiency is therefore still a prerequisite for a more esteemed education. Additionally, as minority institutes are primarily for the purpose of

training cadres, they may not meet the needs of students interested in a broader academic curriculum. In fact, only three of the thirteen nationalities institutes offers a Master's degree, and a PhD may be obtained at only one (Kormondy, 1995), yet comprehensive universities are more expensive and less likely to provide financial assistance. Furthermore, those students who accept scholarships may have more limited employment options upon graduation. Therefore, minority higher education policies only expand *certain* opportunities, while others remain elusive.

Conclusion

The Chinese Communist Party considers improving the educational attainments of minorities as crucial to China's drive toward modernization. Following the tenets of modernization theory, education in China is thought of as a vehicle for modern development because of the assumption that schooling will affect people's beliefs, abilities, and attitudes. Those values embraced by Chinese minorities are not considered conducive to development, and they are therefore discouraged. This is evident by the official position of the Chinese government toward religion, by the standardized curriculum utilized in the schools, and by the use of bilingual education as a mechanism toward Chinese language acquisition.

In addition to promoting a certain set of values conducive to development, modernization theorists also expect schools to prepare students with the skills necessary to shape productive workers, thus leading to economic growth. Preferential admission policies to attract minorities to higher education demonstrate the efforts the Chinese Communist Party has made toward this end. Allowing minorities to take the entrance exam in Chinese if they attend institutes established to train minority cadres, and providing scholarships to students willing to work in minority areas or assume necessary positions, all demonstrate that providing minorities with particular job skills is a high priority. Adding points to minorities' entrance exam scores on a

situational basis also portray the government's commitment to increase the skilled labor among the minority populations through higher education.

While the intention of these efforts is to initiate economic development in minority regions (i.e., to modernize), China's economic development in urban areas has in fact hindered the policies' potential success. Better job opportunities in urban areas limit the interest of minorities in returning to their home regions. The academic programs offered at rural minority institutions cannot compete with the prestigious urban universities, yet with the introduction of tuition, they may also be the only affordable options for poorer minorities.

The Chinese Communist Party takes pride in the efforts made to educate minorities, and firmly believes it will aid development. As one official stated,

> "The great assistance of the relatively more advanced Han is extremely important in speeding up the development of minorities. Yet the Han have selflessly regarded this kind of assistance as their responsibility" (Sautman, 1999: 88).

It is nevertheless evident that the very policies in place to promote China's economic growth are in fact being hindered by it. As China's path to modernization continues, the "selfless Han" will need to initiate new educational policies for minorities if they hope to address this challenge.

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